



**Department of Health and Human Services  
Office of the Commissioner  
Policy and Procedure Statement**

Policy # DHHS-20-05

Issue Date: 12/7/05

Revised Date:

**I. SUBJECT**

Procedures for responding to Indoor Air Quality Concerns

**II. POLICY STATEMENT**

All complaints or concerns regarding indoor air quality in DHHS offices will be investigated as soon as possible.

**III. RATIONALE**

Many buildings in Maine have or have had indoor air quality problems. All complaints or concerns regarding indoor air quality in DHHS offices are important, and will be investigated for an appropriate response. Some types of problems require a more immediate response than others, but an investigation into suspected indoor air quality concerns will be initiated within five (5) business days of any complaint.

**IV. PROCEDURE STATEMENT**

The procedure and chain of events which will be followed for indoor air quality problems is as follows:

1. Any DHHS employee experiencing a problem related to indoor air quality should immediately bring this to the attention of his/her supervisor, who will report it to the Office Manager or highest level manager. Each person reporting a concern should identify the type of problem, where it was experienced, and when it was experienced.
2. The appropriate administrator will immediately forward this information to the Deputy Commissioner for Operations and Support for DHHS central offices or to the Director, Division of Regional Operations for DHHS offices, with copies to the Business Services Manager. The Health and Safety Coordinator will be notified of the specific complaint by the Director of Regional Operations or Deputy Commissioner for Operations and Support and immediately contact the Bureau of General Services (BGS) Air Quality Specialist (287-4509), the building landlord, and/or the property manager. Reports of air quality concerns in the Augusta and Winthrop area will be reported to the Health and Safety Coordinator directly.
3. BGS will determine the immediacy of response. BGS will conduct a building review or appropriate air quality test and/or arrange for a professional consultant for air quality testing. BGS will notify DHHS when to expect the result of a building review and/or air quality testing. The information will be passed on to the affected building employees.

4. BGS or DHHS will provide a copy of the complaint report to the professional air quality specialist. A preliminary meeting (if appropriate) will be held. The purpose of the preliminary meeting is to provide additional background information about the facility in order for the investigation to proceed and be productive. Attending the meeting, at a minimum, will be a "team" consisting of the air quality specialist(s), representatives from BGS, DHHS, the Office Manager, a representative of the employee(s) who filed the complaint, and the landlord, as appropriate.
5. An initial investigation of the building will commence as soon as possible after receiving the complaint. This investigation will be coordinated through the Bureau of General Services and follow the investigation checklist found in the US EPA document "Tools for Schools" or the US EPA document "A Guide for Building Owners and Facility Managers". (Included in this checklist are items such as conducting a visual inspection of the structure and mechanical systems, looking for signs of moisture damage or leaks, blocked ventilation, etc. Testing for Carbon Monoxide (CO), Carbon Dioxide (CO<sub>2</sub>), temperature, and relative humidity will also take place.)
6. An interim or final report of findings will be presented as soon as practical after the investigation is completed. The report will include recommendations for immediate action, if warranted.
7. A meeting will be held of the preliminary meeting "team" and others deemed appropriate to discuss the findings and to determine further action as necessary. Any plan for additional action determined at this meeting will be provided by DHHS (with appropriate others) to staff at the affected building, the employee(s) who made the complaint, and others as deemed appropriate. A plan of action will be developed and will be monitored by designated individuals.

## **V. DEFINITIONS**

Indoor Air Quality: a term used to mean the condition of air in a structure.

Carbon Monoxide: an odorless, colorless, tasteless, poisonous gas produced by incomplete combustion of carbon-based fuel (such as oil, wood, or gasoline).

Carbon Dioxide: a non-toxic gas produced by normal respiration of living organisms. Also produced by complete combustion of carbon-based fuel.

## **VI DISTRIBUTION**

All employees via email and hard-copy postings on designated bulletin boards.

## **VII ATTACHMENTS/SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS**

US EPA "Tools for Schools" Problem Solving Checklist @ [www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/](http://www.epa.gov/iaq/schools/)

US EPA "A Guide for Building Owners and Facility Managers" @ [www.cdc.gov/niosh/baqtoc.html](http://www.cdc.gov/niosh/baqtoc.html)

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Effective Date

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John R. Nicholas  
Commissioner